

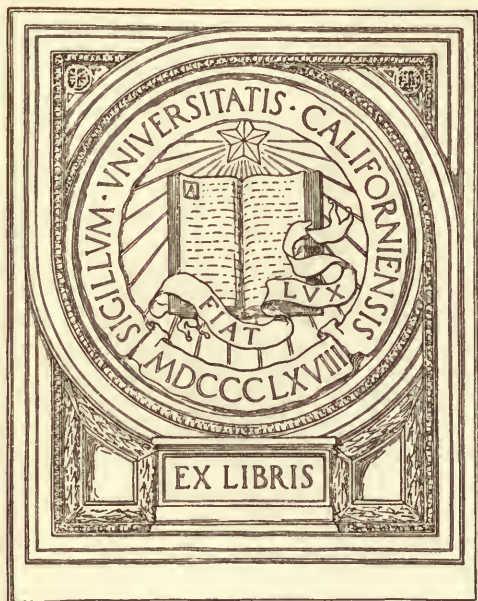
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The Infant in the Sewer-Sheet.



An Ode against the Age.
by Herman George Amel Tower

To
Mr. H. Lehman
with kindest greetings & s
and all good
W is us.
Yours S. Schaffer
Zur Haupt- und
of the California
I know
and
love

The Infant in the News-sheet

An Ode Against the Age
by Herman George Scheffauer

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

I have not fought with iron / yet I am scarred /
Nor wept behind barbed wire / yet I am barred
From my own land.

Only the din from Slaughter's roaring fields /
Not Slaughter's self was quartered in my soul /
Fenced with its many shields

And guarded by the erect / forbidding hand —
And yet the mirror of my life is marred
With spectres of Great Death. A hole
Gapes in it through which glower pupilless
The eyes of cold familiars — Time and Space;
Their masks like prison-walls confront my face /
And their lips drone: Thy name is Emptiness —
Thy name is like a moth's thin carapace
Left on some cupboard's dark and dusty shelf —
Fantastic One!

Thou exile from thy city and thy sun —
Thou fool that wast interned within thyself!

I Instead of songs these years I barbed and feathered
Arrows for all arch-criminals — I wrought
A jagged Roman sword for daily use;
My forehead like a fortress-keep grew weathered;
Along each road and river-bed I sought
The sharpest / balanced stones for my frail sling /
And slung them with a curse and gave them wing
To split the forehead of the blood-drunk muse /

Tall reams on reams
Of paper I defiled
With words at which my gorge had once rebelled /
And dreams / black dreams /
Were born each night from fancies big with child /
And yet excelled
My pen in this grim game / though handicapped /
Shut in this cauldron that was like a bell
Inverted over Satan's sharpest fires /
And then again o'er starving cities clapped
The list of babe-mortalities to swell
By Writs in Council and the false blockade —
Till choked in paper brakes and hissing wires /
I saw the Earth as refuse in the shade
Of her gigantic Liars.

And then as this Great Dying
Ran like a howling wolf across the world /
There rose a sound of tremulous thin crying
Like a stray tendril round a scaffold curled.
Ink fell from chartless quarters of those skies
From which the stars had fallen long before /
And monstrous zodiacs creaked above my room;
The pictures on the walls spoke with their eyes
Riddles whose answers chained me to the floor.
In every doorway I ran tilt 'gainst doom /
And through each thirsty flue that held its horn
To drink the blood of dusk / the tears of morn /
There fell the currents of those gathering cries.

Dear that I had bred for planet-strains!
Brash as a saw this uproar tore its shell —

My nostrils eager for the small bright bloom /
Had surfeit of the drains
That rolled from land to land in one deep swell /
From slaughter-field to slaughter-house /
From press-vaults and the upholstered chancelleries
Nothing but these —
Hate's black delirium. Murder's red carouse.
Cloaca Maxima! Victorious Hell!

I hunted words / some cabbalistic sign /
Some puissant symbol / some swift-killing curse.
I ransacked language / shook out prose and verse
Like some old sack. I dug in dust divine
To seek in ruins ultimate salvation / —
Roamed painters' kingdoms—Brueghel / Goya / Dürer —
And called on Faust as Faust upon his demon;
Opened the iron clamps of the "Witches' Hammer / " —
A flame shot in my face! Abomination
Of insane moonlight and the burning flesh
Of girls on pyres—many a devil's leman.
And clearer I saw and ever clearer
That all these words could only limp and stammer
And dash my hope afresh.
I knew the towering word could not be found
To give this Thing a name —
A name for Moloch, fit in sense and sound /
A name with which this Horror might be crowned —
This War / Man's deepest Fall / Earth's darkest shame.

Ha! in and out of season —
Like a great mortar squat on iron haunches /
Against the citadels of sense and reason

To vomit doom / as Krakatoa launches
His crown against his valleys. Such a voice /
Such massy words had stirred you / human dross /
To whimper or rejoice.
Shapes wrought of sand and water / stagnant herds /
Fat stuff for moulding by the men of words —
Such speech you understand!
Or had I swooped / a plated albatross /
Dropping steel eggs upon your lives and land /
I might have seemed a saviour and a Michael /
Writing dread judgments on the firmament /
And winding up this grim mechanic cycle
With its own spawn — the iron roc Earth-bent
To feed on your ox-livers —
You that begot the Tank
That waddled in a broth of mothers' sons
Or stood / a flaming furnace / in the rivers
Of dead men sprawling and porrected guns.
Sweet saurian of our new primordial clime /
The Earth was far too small for you — and stank.
Gulpers of gas and banquetters on slime /
Blind / headless heroes in the fire-mists /
That draped yourselves like rags on webs of wire
Spun for you by the lurking journalists
That boil the brew and blow upon the fire /
How long you breathed the thin and floating dust
Of shattered brothers that went up in clouds
And fell across all Europe till a crust
Lay on us all — walking in human shrouds.
Might I have crept
Upon you like a mortal Blue Cross fog /
King Stork to mount the throne of dull King Cog /

And blasted lungs and brain the while you slept /
Even though weaponless without the Word /
The Symbol or the Dream /
My voice had found a vehicle / had stirred
The sick / the hypnotized / the hamstrung herd
With some immortal shout or scream.

But not in vain
Lowered these eyes, nor dwelt this brain
Upon the nations' pageants as they lurched
In hideous mummary past my darkened pane —
Shall he not find that honestly has searched?
I found what I would never seek again.

A town — a street — a noble town and old.
A mouldering house / dark with phantasmal fears.
Strata of cold and night in these stone tiers /
And many ministrants to night and cold.
Brick husks. A bleak and poisoned room . . .
By odour first the Wonder stood proclaimed /
As from the foulness of that inner tomb
A draught of thicker foulness like a claw
Struck at my throat.
My furtive-groping foot was lamed
By fear — perhaps by awe.
And next by hearing /
For then soared up a thin and brittle note
Of ancient anguish sharp and searing /
A wail within that night —
And then by sight —
I saw within the murky chamber lying /
Within that dusk of Cimbo ashen-cold /

By the pale halo of a pocket torch
The naked / new-born babe. I heard it crying —
My fellow-man—whose birth was one with dying —
I heard it pule — I looked upon its old
And wrinkled face—its eyes were raised to scorch
And damn — I heard it pule and bleat
And then there thundered down the corridor
Without — — — —
My daemon's rolling and triumphant shout: —
Behold the one true symbol of the War —
The starveling infant in the stinking sheet!

The sheet was not of cloth—it was of paper —
A news-sheet cast from some prolific press —
Outspread and manifolded on the straw —
It lay as though some grocer or some draper
Had spread it for a packet — yes /
I saw the Gothic title and I saw
The swarming headlines and the tiers of text /
Making the white sheet grey /
The clamourous advertisements / and next
I saw where woe's anointed infant lay
Naked and free
In all its stark / its terrible majesty.

The flush of birth had faded from its flesh —
Its hue was lead /
One with the colour of its papern bed —
Its limbs were stems
Thin as dead flowers that were never fresh.
Its eyes were gems.
Its knotted knees

Were like gnarled clubs — the swollen head
Colled to and fro
Ponderously on a reedy neck and blue.
Its belly as in mockery seemed obese;
It was as one long dead /
A thing in which the blood had ceased to flow /
Its twitchings gave a mock-life to the show /
Its hands erred back and forth /
Its whines attested too
Its claim to human kinship. Could it speak
Another tongue than this
In this domain where all the world is North —
Its lightest squeak
Were mightier than Death's petrific kiss.

The sodden sheet was crumpled and defiled
With boot-heel marks and streaks of city mud /
With ordure of the child /
And from the navel-cord that still forbore — —
A central sore — —
To seal its farewell to such warmth and food
As once the mother gave /
Came the red veto of its blood /
Came yellow pus that crawled in beads and smears
Across this living grave.
One corner of the sheet hung wet and grey
With the babe's water? With the mother's tears?
I could not say.

Thou rememberest / Galilean? — —
Surely thou hast not forgotten / Nazarene?
What time thy mother bore thee

In Bethlehem's snug stall?
The straw was soft and clean /
There was warm breath of ox and cow /
There rang a paean /
A happy paean rang o'er thee /
A natal hymn
Carolled by plump / melodious cherubim /
And a star outsplendoring all.
Three glittering monarchs came to bow
And lay Earth's treasures at thy rose-red feet
And kiss thy head /
And from thy mother's breast / white / taut and sweet /
Thou wast bountifully fed.

Thy followers have built another planet
For mothers and for babes.
Their stable is a prison. They have jailed
'Neath monstrous Pole=Stars / brazen astrolabes /
This Earth. They shall prevail / they have prevailed
As once the blue-ribbed flocs that overran it.
They teach the lesson they have learnt:
Babes are not laid in stables. These are burnt.
Babes are not laid in mangers. These are strawless.
No stars pour silver fire
To stir the womb of anguish in the slums.
The chorus is of fiends — no lute, no choir
Angelic hither comes
Across the maddened centuries and lawless /
Save death=bells tolling
And ever again the rolling
Of the triumphant / croaking drums . . .
Three terrible kings came riding down

Beneath black banners into dead Vienna;
They scented quarry in the steeped town /
The new Gehenna.

Three tyrants clad like cliffs in pride and power
And garmented in winds of harshest lust —
They came to stand as sponsors at this birth /
To welcome these few pounds of flesh and dust
Unto the groaning / ever-reeling Earth.
Cold like a hooded tower
With eyes like asteroids of splintered glass
And beard of marble / stalactites and ice — —
A mildew of blue frost fell from the mass;
His cloak hung like a glacier blank and sheer
From a gaunt peak of gneiss.
And Hunger / the accursed apparition /
Rigged of parched leather and of dusty stone /
With rolling skull
And the long fangs that gleamed from ear to ear /
Row upon row /
And ate themselves in horrible attrition /
And where the eyes should be / two caverns dull
Under the chalk-white brow
Crowned with a mitre plied of human bone
And sceptered with a femur polished white.
Disease / a nebulous afrit in a cloud
Of sea-green mist transfixed by fever-light /
Moving in its hot breath /
Wherein there shone a blood-beflecked harpoon /
A rusty shovel and a mouldy spoon /
Like spectres in a cavern / in a shroud
Of pestilence and death.

Scant was the space within the room /
Yet there was space for these —
Three stern ambassadors from the courts of Doom —
Cold / Hunger and Disease.

Ah / babe / what mighty guests are at thy side /
Before thy bed — or bier /
Each with its iron grail /
Each with its mission secret and austere.
Yet thou art mightier than these kings of Earth /
And stronger than the hero locked in mail —
Thou the Tormented / Thou the Crucified —
The Crucified at birth.
Thou that didst take upon thee all the crimes /
The burden of our fell civilization —
Thou cold / thou sick / thou famished one /
Now gasping midst the draff of man's damnation —
Wrapped in some journal scrofulous and dun —
The Tribune? Matin? or the London Times?

O wonder! shining miracle and wonder!
A wind streamed from the paper. Voices spake:
We crave release /
We the imprisoned spirits of the woods /
Seek our old peace.
We that were slain even as our solitudes
A thousand oats of balsam seemed to break
Asunder
Over this corruption and this grief
Most incommensurable / darkest / sorest /
Over this wrong.
The winds danced in smooth spirals like a song /

And shining emerald fires of the forest
Made the air one green leaf.
Mingled with pale blue torrents of the moon.
Birds piped and trilled
Until the tinny cry of the babe was stilled
And the racked city sank in a golden swoon.

And then the leaves of paper foul and grey
Became — became once more — the leaves of trees /
These palimpsests of infamy and shame
Rustled to some sweet breeze
That stirred the dazzling volume of the day.
Each leaf became a tongue / each tongue a flame /
As from a crystal torch / a silver horn
Ringing and burning from blue firmaments /
And by a high terrestrial music borne:
O men that are our kin in fate and law —
For you the sword / for us the saw;
Look on the slaughter of Earth's innocents /
For we are innocent from birth to death.
Even as the sword went withering through your files /
Crying: What need of breath? —
The sword that is Earth's symbol / not the cross /
So rode the axe into our forest aisles /
The ravening and insensate maw
Slew us
And overthrew us
And turned us into dross.

O forests fair transformed to daily dirt!
O landscapes curst with scurf and cicatrice!
So all our health fermented into hurt

And packed with havoc like a leprosy
We foamed across the nations proud and high /
Blasting them with our kiss.
The offal of daemonian machines /
Of spider-gods rapt in infernal work /
Whose wills were hidden springs within the scenes —
Pent in divine / in tireless steel /
From glittering monsters spinning ceaselessly /
We wandered from the press-vault's yellow murk /
From the white / never-ending reel.
Greed rode upon our rustling cataracts /
A Gulf Stream washing death from port to port /
And so they fell as fell our forest tracts — —
The myriads drugged with sport /
With war / with traffic / drink and harlotries /
Until our slimy rivers spread to seas /
To mirrors blank of fever-fumes and mud — —
The planet reeled / a globe of clouded glass /
Under the red eruptions of this gas;
Night sank its fans. The last ray knew eclipse — —
War's fagot flew through palace / town and ships /
The frontiers closed like doors that had no key /
And fell the red apocalyptic Flood — —
Catastrophe!

Silence. The forest spoke no more. A wind
Ached in the hour. And the city sighed.
The world stood empty like a chapel robbed.
The telephones in charnel-houses dinned.
The cold / black dwellings sobbed
As with the forest's mouth; — the infant's walls
Aroused a voice that from the alleys cried:

Come! uncorrupted gales
That over seas and mountain=crests have danced /
Cannot you shield
This hovel from the crowding battlefield
Beneath our windows and our walls advanced?
Cannot you whip away
The odour of dead crimes that night and day
The charnel of our Christian creed exhales
Over Earth's torture chambers and her jails?

Sick starveling in your shameful Nessus shirt /
Plied of Man's venom and of Heaven's ire /
Racked in your winding=sheet of night and fire /
Of the world's madness and the age's hurt /
Clad in your royal coat of draggled ermine /
You tiny pontifex / you fragile link /
Enthroned on sodden pulp and tarry ink /
Your stars are sores — your servitors are vermin.

O Holy Hunger! In your order bleak
The flesh dissolves to dreams / the body fades to spirit /
You have not far to seek /
Conquering Nature / you shall conquer nations /
As these shall conquer worlds that shrink and cower /
Such worlds as you and you alone inherit /
For you are King of Kings in pomp and power /
Marshalled with all the hosts that are starvation's.
Take up / each babe not wholly dead /
Take up / take up its papern bed —
Take up / you Infants that have slept
Too long on Golgothas where your mothers wept —
Take up each babe its cross!

And I shall lead you forth to win a war /
A war without a wound / without a loss.
And this small body's weight shall batter in
As with a morning-star
In the mailed and ponderous fist of a Paladin /
The giant egg / the stone cuirass of sin.
This tiny body blue and feather-light
Shall yet outweigh the thunder-hulks that starved it /
This little / livid skeleton shall blight
The towers of Baal. A Cenotaph be carved it!
Like that tall catafalque that now enhearses —
Though it be like a flower shrivelled white
And lighter than the crystal star of snow —
The heaviest corpse that crushes England low —
Under the moaning nations and their curses /
The corpse that like Mahomet sways above
Her empire doomed — a sword to strike a blow /
A flame which all her seas can never smother /
So great was the white lustre of this Love /
A never-silent voice / a temple drum —
MacSwiney's saintly frame — thy shining brother!
Radiant! invincible in martyrdom!

I know the beauty that in babes should dwell
When the first petals of their days unfurl /
For I am father to a human flower /
A winsome and a radiant girl /
A bud that shines in limbo / in this hell
The despots of the Earth have made of Earth.
In her birth came to me a second birth
And in my days of loss a glorious dower.
O exile's daughter /

That saw the dark at New Year in Berlin /
 The child of one they charged with treason rank
 And sought to blacken with the spoor of sin /
 Whose guilt was writ in water
 By courts that in their own corruption stank /
 Whose false indictment was a scrap of paper
 Far fouler than the rag that holds this mite
 Within this Austrian hovel /
 This living grim indictment of our age /
 This phosphorescence o'er the grave of Light.
 Across the seas I saw their torture-dens
 Close in to smother the last lighted taper
 Of Freedom / she whose breast a thousand pens
 Transfixed. Saw flags hide corpses / millions grovel
 Before the hoofs of tyranny and darkness —
 A hideous / hell-sprung page!
 I saw in all its starkness
 Like some gaunt / leafless elm along the Styx /
 Beyond the rusted cages and the bars /
 The headless / one-armed crucifix
 Reared high against the smoke-congested stars /
 The gibbet where the foes of right and reason
 Had longed to hang the men who like thy father
 Stood smiling at the tyrant's cry of treason
 That was but loyalty to Truth and Light.
 Would you not rather /
 Fiona fair / Fiona mine /
 Have had a sire with more elastic neck /
 A neck supine /
 Inured to stretching by the tools of might /
 One more complaisant to the loathly jests
 That thug and thief scrawled on the Fathers' Law /

One more obedient to the call and beck
Of steel-beaked harpies that defiled the nests
Of eagles shining on the cliffs of awe?
But till within your dark-blue eyes I read
The reflex of my guilt /
The countermanding of our blood and breed;
Till from your rose-red mouth there falls the sentence
And in your heart the gallows-tree is built /
I am without remorse / without repentance.
Until on your pure brow
Under the wavering halo of your hair /
You malefactor's child /
Burns the black stigma of the Judas sign /
And I behold the dagger in the air /
As the lean Cataline beholds it now /
I shall not lift the iron bays from mine
Still unaverted and still undefiled /
To forge fresh manacles for hands that smote
The despots on their slant and obscene brows —
Nor for the hands that wrote
In inescapable bondage to my vows /
My credo and my time —
Not until she that bore you /
Your mother of English blood / the poetess /
Shall raise her hand to curse and not to bless /
Shall I denounce my conscience as my crime
Nor plead forgiveness as I kneel before you.

Fiona be your name — so we decreed
Remembering one who shall not come again /
A noble friend /
One who went forth in the dark hour of need

To see the hopeless battle to its end /
 To lay his heart upon green Erin's heart /
 One who was sold to treachery and pain /
 A saviour whom they stripped upon the mart /
 Whom ice-cold judges sentenced to be slain /
 One who had borne his heart as 'twere a flame /
 A white flame for the world to warm its hands /
 A champion of his land and all the lands
 That writhe in woe and shame /
 One whose tall / kingly body fell to fame
 In cursed Pentonville /
 To glory and to immortality /
 One whom the ropes of England could not kill /
 Whose soul shone through the stones of her Bastille /
 One whose great Irish heart was like the sea /
 Deep / pure and moved by an immortal will.

Francisca / too / we called thee
 In memory of the town where I was born /
 The city young and beautiful /
 Fairer to me than Shiraz or Stamboul /
 Fairer the Golden Gate than the Golden Horn.
 Ah / town / the hills that walled thee
 Send through the years their signals to my heart /
 And the blue seas whereon thy body lay /
 Superb / supine / insolent and apart /
 She-centaur / 'twixt the ocean and the bay.
 The swift foam of the fretted water-road
 With surges rolling like thy blowing hair
 Under the west-wind's goad /
 And the streets soaring like a temple stair
 Unto their seven crests /

The park that rose in magic from the dunes /
And where I lay at nights and noons
Upon thy virginal, imperious breasts —
The cloven Peaks
Such were the visions that I drank / my daughter /
This sunlight and these mists /
This wind that sings and speaks /
These hills / these shining homes / this dancing water /
This the vast loveliness that none resists.
Such is the world the mace of war destroyed
For many as for me —
Out of the rains of ashes in the void
And through the shadows falling on the sea /
Still shines the unforgettable fair vision
Above the waste of exile and misprision /
And something of its flame /
Lightens for me / Francisca / in thy name.

O bend / my child / and lay thy little hand
In benediction on thy brother's arm /
But not too firmly press
With thy caress
Lest that the bird-like bones should come to harm —
O understand!
This babe is too ethereal / too slender /
Its arms / its legs too slack /
Its muscles and its spine too soft and tender —
Such stems might bend or crack.

Lay thy small rosy hand within this claw
Livid and cold and blue /
Ah, see how this thine enemy lies prone /

A thing beyond compassion or the law /
Mouthed by this Peace as tigers mouth a bone /
Condemned to starve and stew —
A withered leaf and thou an infant rose.
Hast thou no curse / no hate /
No imprecation for this foe of foes /
Such as still hisses from this infant's bed
Out of the sheets that have usurped the State?
New tyrants in the ancient tyrants' stead.
Hast thou no insult for this baby's crimes /
Such as four white-haired harpies might invent
Behind the padded doors of council-rooms /
Or in the lair of either of the "Times?"
Hath not the fiat of that President
Thrice-damned for whom shame's deepest circles yawn,
Declared thee for the foe of this thy brother?
Devised for him such unremitting dooms?
Did not our great Allies wear down his mother
Until her breasts were aching craters spent
And on their iron beds her love lay drawn
And quartered? 'Twas a fitting punishment.

So do I wed this babe to years to be /
Pledging her to a distant task divine — —
Here where the offering dies upon the shrine
Of hunger and of world-wide villainy — —
Here where the infant writhes upon the grids
Of print and poison and abomination /
Here whilst the tears are beating at my lids /
I clasp her hand in love that lies beyond
The love of lover / parent or of nation /
I pledge her to a sun whose beams shall break

The blood-drenched pages of the tiger's bond /
Whose song shall shake
The stones of man's great jail / whose glow shall drink
The seas of hatred in the people's breasts
Until they shrink —
And bare again the sunken mountain-crests /
The Isles and Ports of Reconciliation.

A great rose burns a way through these grim walls;
Its roots are tangled deep in slaughter-fields /
Strike through a thousand hearts / a thousand homes /
Its petals blaze like flames on silver shields /
And from its core a healing balsam falls /
Heavy as honey from the golden combs
To heal the world's vast wound.
I see the archangelic flower turn /
Annuling chaos and dismantling night.
Shedding its benediction / see it burn /
A heart unfolding in a sea of light;
Music flows from it / from it falls a voice
That bids the chain-fast multitudes be free
Of their own demons / and rejoice
In this their new and untried liberty.
But only in the white / inclement lustre
Of Truth / the crystalline / implacable /
Will the great Rose unfold its glorious cluster
Or its dew fall to salvage hearts in hell.

The worms are gnawing at the sacred roots /
And the grey-pinioned vampires / hour by hour
Tear at the heavenly shoots /
And pitch and veer;

The paper locusts rustle and would devour /
Like clouds that eat the blue from out the sky
The symbol holy and austere /
To blast it with the mildew of the life /
And clot with vermin the seraphic flower.

My pen still spoke for Peace. Always it wrought for Reason.
Still it obeyed Truth's mystic gravity —
A loyal needle in and out of season /
It strove / perhaps all blindly / towards the Pole /
It was not drunk with visions of the goal /
Nor rusted like a lance-head in the deep /
Nor span in vortices of phantasy
Within a world of wolves and apes and sheep.
Content to scratch one letter on the scroll /
The chart and charter of our slow advance /
To lay one stone /
A firm / however small a one /
Even such as I have chosen and have hurtled
To strike by chance
The dark-browed / brutish Keepers of the Keys —
To lay myself / my work alone
In the foundations of a sane / sound world,
A planetary House at Peace.

Above the swamps of false democracy
Lifts up the vision terrible and red /
Clear to the seer as to the masses hid /
The self=doomed and the never=to=be-free —
How nation feeds on nation
In Life's remorseless / murderous pyramid /
And Chaos breeds new wars in her black bed.

And yet I see one hope / one liberation /
One beam to cleave one bar of our damnation /
Millenia to win or to restore /
One rescue—one redress /
And all my meagre wisdom ends in this:
That man must first
Wipe from his lips the kiss, the thrice=accurst /
The leprous and the soul=corrupting kiss
Of the Great Whore /
The strumpet press compact of tar and mire /
Whose breath is pestilence / whose heart is mud /
The harlot press /
Deadly in her wooing and her caress /
The Great Vampire /
Whose iron claws are reddened as with henna
With the peace=seraph's blood /
Whose thousand dugs drip with the mortal bane
That chills the veins of moribund Vienna,
Whereof the peoples drink and then go mad
When capitals snuff out the guiding brain
And the towns dance in flags of frenzy clad.

O not with chains of iron or of silk
She holds you in her bondage / this great Harlot /
And yet by force she bids you suck her milk
Sulphurous and foul / the while her great flesh=flies
With scales of burnished green or fiery scarlet
Go crawl across your lips;
'Tis not by force she holds you 'twixt her hips
Or crushes you as a stool for her huge thighs /
'Tis only by the rottenness of your wills /
The slave and antic in your squirrel=souls / —

That the gigantic trull enslaves and kills /
And fattens on your myriad daily doles.

And yet no monster weaker than is she —
One touch—her paper mantle tears and falls!
One rent—and she fulfils her destiny
Under the pavements and behind the walls
Washing and wandering back to her first sources /
And the black circle is complete again
In foulness unto foulness—and the forces
Of evil boil in cesspool and in drain.
You slaves of Circe—would you not embrace
Her spongy body or belick her face —
Revert your own—and slay her with a look
You need not give. The look that is not given
Is mortal. Turn your eyes and she is dead.
Her venom seeps no more from eye to brain
And all your lifelong manacles are shed —
Dead is the evil sheet that is not read
And closed and burned the Pestilential Book
And you are cleansed and free
Like a new wind / an open sea /
Your souls are shriven.
Without your blood the Vampire cannot live —
No life has she save what you choose to give.

Still rolls the Juggernaut that never stirs
From its fixed platform on the dais-stone
Whereon it clanks and whirs
Pitiless / triumphant and alone /
The engine genius built to multiply
The seeds of light and liberty / to shatter

The dungeon-walls for thought—to rend the sky
To a great lace of light—now rolls you flatter
Than the white ribbons that it swallows swift.
Forever beneath its murmuring rollers drift
The Mississippi of the multitudes
In the rash currents of their passions caught /
Their follies and their wanton moods.
What need / then / that the daemonian Juggernaut
Should crawl along the city streets or bathe
Its millstone wheels in miles of flesh and blood /
When all the highways flow in one broad swathe
Bearing its victims in one headlong flood
To the incessant / insatiable machine
That crushes / trims and stamps them with its brands
Then voids them as bleached excrement obscene —
Slaves! suicides! cannon=fodder of all lands!
O you! the patient plains of humankind!
You that endure so much—yet never endure —
O you / the herds that never hear—the blind /
The sterile of soul / the eternally immature —
You that are dross—might you but be manure!
So that from your eternal sacrifice /
From the black continents / from battlefields
Of mad and purposeless sterility
Where you have sown your future / there may spring
The fairer yields / —
Some perfect blade / some gleam of sweet fertility /
Some flower — not the hooded cockatrice
You hug unto your breasts so thin and raw /
Some silver song that happier times may sing /
Or some white goddess with the Splendid Law.

So have I found my symbol — found at last
Groping within a sunless world / this sign /
Wrestling with hugest hate / torn by the blast
That howls from every council-room and street
Or bursts and blooms in flame — a hidden mine /
Beneath our feet /
Since the two glacial poles have made invasion
Of Europe and the black infernal yeast
Stirs in all human hearts. I see the peoples / —
Dupes of a fell persuasion —
Impaled like Titans on the flinty steeples
Or on the spiny back of the racing beast.
Yet children of children / they the very least /
Giants in strength / yet helpless things that writhe
Under the heels of slaughter / greed and rage /
Waiting the clang of the descending scythe —
So have I found the symbol of the Age /
Found the one vision that has made me free /
Though bound to all that suffer in its cage
From zenith to nadir of their misery /
From nadir to zenith of their hollow joy /
And I will cry it loudly through the streets /
Like some newsboy:
Come forth! you masses from your hiding-places
And look upon this face — then on your faces —
You starveling infants in the stinking sheets!







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